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A Message from the May Fest Team

This year May Fest celebrated its 7th year with its biggest programme to date offering over 150 events throughout the weekend. Encompassing a wide variety of themes from Science, Health and Wellbeing to Culture, History and Heritage, the festival continues to provide topical and enthralling events in unique and creative ways. In particular, the Discover strand continues to evolve giving festival goers the opportunity to hear about the tremendous research being carried out by our staff and students at the University of Aberdeen.

As the University’s flagship event, May Fest continues to facilitate a direct and ongoing connection with the local community, a relationship which we are proud to maintain. Moreover, our varied programmes allow us to showcase a wealth of current research, engaging in fascinating discussion, and highlighting cultural activity for people of all ages.

Embracing the University of Aberdeen’s foundational statement ‘Open to All’, we also celebrated the development of our new May Fest City and Community programmes which were extremely well received, and we look forward to developing these programmes for May Fest 2020.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all of our sponsors, donors and partners for their generous support, particularly CNOOC International for their generous donation to support the Children’s and Schools’ programme. We are extremely grateful for the support May Fest receives allowing the festival to develop and thrive each year and continue to offer a diverse programme of mostly free events.

We hope you enjoyed May Fest 2019 as much as we did, and we look forward to welcoming you next year!

May Fest Team
Jill Murray, Lottie Rodger, Angela Michael, Lynne Grant and Rhona Skene
DISCOVER

The Discover theme once again showcased the most cutting-edge research and development that the University has to offer. Our staff and students came together and hosted a suite of events including talks, workshops, tours and exhibitions. This year topics ranged from the latest gene editing techniques and their impact on transforming medicine, to finding out how to create an exhibition. There was also a chance to bind your own mini book and learn how important non-technical skills are, as well as an insight into investigating and dealing with cyberbullying.

WORD

This year’s WORD strand captured music, poetry and prose in Doric, English and Gaelic. Top literary names included Abir Mukherjee, Alan Spence, Caroline Criado-Perez, Bernard MacLaverty and Sara Baume. The written word and music were combined to remember the Iolaire disaster with Donald S. Murray, Gaelic poet Anne Frater and piper Martin MacDonald. Makar Liz Lochhead and saxophonist Steve Kettley also put on a captivating performance combining poems, monologues and music.

CULTURE, HISTORY AND HERITAGE

We had a large offering of events to showcase the Culture, History and Heritage programme including looking at how decisions of the past made Aberdeen the city it is today. We also examined Scottish Tourism and guest speakers explored insights into the daily lives of the Scottish Travelling community at our Traveller Encampment. Lord Bruce also hosted a packed event detailing the historical links between King Robert the Bruce and Aberdeen.

MUSIC

There were lots of musical opportunities throughout the May Fest weekend with performances from the University’s Jazz Orchestra, The Polish-Scottish Song Group and Any Enemy, an ensemble comprised of students and staff. Steel band Pandemonium hosted an open-air evening show in the spectacular Cruickshank Botanic Garden and there was a chance to hear some incredible folk songs that were written about Aberdeen’s medieval past.
VISION
The Vision theme had a broad spectrum of events from learning how to rap and step-dance to crafts skills and aesthetics in MRI. We hosted two ‘Directors Cut’ events with Ruth Beckermann, director of The Waldheim Waltz, and another with University of Aberdeen alumnus Jon S. Baird, director of Bafta Nominated Stan & Ollie.

SCIENCE, HEALTH AND WELLBEING
The Science, Health and Wellbeing programme had a huge array of events taking place, from looking at why we are living longer to Aberdeen’s first female graduates. Visitors had the chance to practice Mindfulness and see how this can contribute to our awareness in everyday life, they also found out how superbugs are formed and looked at the history of Aberdeen’s Hospitals. We also celebrated the Year of the Periodic Table with a knitted version on show and discovered more about medication in older persons and the latest research in oral cancer.

SPORT
At the Aberdeen Sports Village we hosted tours of the amazing exercise and sport facilities and got the chance to hear a fascinating talk from Patrick Miley, coach of Olympian swimmer Hannah Miley. We also investigated how much you need to run or walk to burn off your favourite foods.

ENVIRONMENT
The Cruickshank Botanic Garden tours were extremely popular as part of the Environment strand with each tour being fully booked. Other events covered the importance of growing trees, the impact of climate change and how to reduce negative influences on our environment.

TOURS
There were guided tours of King’s College Chapel, Seaton Park, and the Cruickshank Botanic Garden that were all extremely popular and gave participants an insight into these scenic places. Visitors had the opportunity to take a tour around Aberdeen and unearth invisible women from the city’s historic past. They also discovered the Scottish Traveller trail and heard about their lives in the city.
There were 11,945 recorded visitor interactions at the 2019 May Fest

Over 95% of survey respondents rated the event(s) they attended positively

In response to how visitors heard about May Fest, having attended previously, word of mouth, and discovering the festival brochure polled as the most popular methods, collectively accounting for 62% of chosen methods

Approximately 30% of respondents were visitors to Aberdeen, not living locally

49% of respondents estimated their daily expenditure at May Fest 2019 to be £10 or less. This was likely to be directly influenced by the provision of a programme that was almost entirely free

May Fest 2019 was the biggest festival yet, with over 150 programmed events taking place over the weekend, with 33 schools’ events offered earlier in the week

Volunteers contributed more than 340 hours collectively over the May Fest weekend

When asked to comment on the elements of May Fest 2019 that they most enjoyed, visitors highlighted several key areas which performed well, including:

- Interesting programme
- Family friendly events
- Festival organization
- Friendly staff
- Welcoming atmosphere on campus
- Engaging tours promoting the local area
- Catering options
Visitor Comments

“We always come to May Fest and have a great time – this year there were a lot of really great and interesting things on, I thought the programme was really strong.”

“Loved, loved, loved the science lectures, Hall of Mayhem, and author readings.”

“Wonderful opportunity, all sorts of different topics to explore.”

“A wide range of events held in an attractive surrounding, well catered, warm welcome, helpful staff.”

Information on Visitor Demographics*

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<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
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<td>71.52%</td>
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*Information on visitor demographics collected from visitor surveys.
> **30,000** copies of the full colour programme were distributed to cultural hubs such as tourist information centres, libraries, museums and schools as well as through our partners, sponsors and direct mail

> Targeted events e-zines were sent to over **8,000** subscribers and **41,000** Alumni

> **Outdoor advertising campaigns** in the city centre comprised of banners and signage in and around campus with public facing banners on King street

> **Extensive broadcast media coverage** on ShmuFM and Northsound 1

> Extensive coverage in print and online in key publications which helped us attract audiences

> Coverage was **100% positive** in tone

> The **Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE)** was more than **£122,110**

> **Long-length features** highlighting not only May Fest events but the wider issues they address including the prejudice faced by travelling communities

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**Social Media Facts:**

> Facebook posts promoting May Fest 2019 reached **37,996**, people, with Instagram reaching **10,036** and Twitter creating **639** impressions

> The **What’s on Facebook** page received **772**, reactions, likes and comment, with post clicks making up for **71%** of total engagement (1,850)

> **Organic posts** accounted for **90%** of people reached on Facebook, while paid posts accounted for **10%**. However, with only 2 of the 35 posts ‘boosted’, proportionally the paid promotions performed well

> **Reactions** (likes, comments, etc.) accounted for 84% of total engagement on the University’s **Instagram** page, with 16% of engagement coming from profile visits

> **Twitter engagement** was evenly dispersed with 52% of engagement coming from reactions (likes, retweets etc.) and 48% coming from link clicks
This year’s Schools’ programme was the biggest and most successful yet, running over 2 days with more than 30 engaging and educational events for pupils and teachers to enjoy. The School’s programme has grown considerably over the years and we are delighted it attracted more than 600 children from 12 primary schools located in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. As part of our outreach programme, we also provided classroom workshops for 50 children in additional support education within their schools.

The varied events offered interactive sessions including ‘TechFest’s K’NEX Dinosaurs’ events in which pupils had fun developing their construction skills in this introduction to engineering. Viking secrets were uncovered, and pupils learned about the Viking’s mysterious ways and were given the chance to write their own Viking poetry and runic messages. Pupils also learned about traditional Chinese folk tales that inspired the children’s book The Gruffalo, as well as learning about Chinese Dance and Calligraphy. Another workshop ‘Sneaky Bugs’ focused on Microbes to find out how they affect us every day and there was also a look into the amazing world of microscopy in ‘Exploring the Hidden World’.

The Schools’ programme had a range of events on offer designed to complement all areas of the curriculum including Science, Expressive Arts, Language, Maths, Health and Wellbeing. May Fest aims to be open to all and easily accessible for any school with all events being FREE of charge. This incredible programme was only made possible with thanks to CNOOC International who generously supported it.

Facts & Figures

- 96% of teachers advised they would undertake follow-up activities in the class room
- 95% of teachers would recommend the May Fest Schools’ events to other teachers
- 96% of teachers rated pupil’s overall enjoyment as good or very good
- 94% of teachers rated the relevance of the event to the curriculum as good or very good
- 94% of teachers rated their overall opinion of the event as good or very good

Comments from Teachers

St Peters RC School: We have been learning about Vikings, so the children could use previous knowledge and learned something new. We enjoy coming to May Fest each year. (Uncovering Viking Secrets)

Newtonhill School: The children had a hands-on experience and enjoyed the active learning. (Snot and Sickness)

Kininmonth School: The children really enjoyed the event, it was delivered well, and they really enjoyed taking part in the experiments. A great workshop, thanks! (Sneaky Bugs: How microbes make us sick and keep us healthy).

Kirkhill School: An engaging and exciting experience for the class. Even just being on campus is interesting for the children as many have never been before. (TechFest’s K’NEX Dinosaurs)
The Children’s programme was as packed as ever, in fact it was the biggest yet with **35 events** for children and parents to enjoy.

From meeting children’s author **David Macphail** who gave an entertaining reading of his book *Thorfinn the Nicest Viking* to the amazing astronomical ‘Pop-Up Planetarium’ there was something for every age group to enjoy.

The fantastic **Hall of Mayhem** was back again with **over 1,580 people** visiting the drop-in sessions making it the busiest year to date. Families were able to participate in a plethora of hands on activities including: learning about **forensic science**, our bodies and organs, a look into the hidden world with **microscopes** and why snot keeps us from getting ill – children even made their own fake snot to take home! Families found out how bacteria affect us every day as well as how we use **earthquakes** to discover how our planet works. Children were also given the opportunity to meet their favourite **super-hero**, have their **face painted** or join in the fun in the soft play area.

**Scotty’s circus workshops** had children and parents learning circus skills such as plate spinning, diablos, fun wheels and stilts. The circus workshops are always popular with festival goers of all ages. The fun also spilled outside onto the King’s Lawn with Gaelic speaking kelpie riders as well as crafts and storytelling in the Traveller Encampment.

The **Confucius Institute** had a tremendous amount on offer from **Chinese games and crafts** to **Chinese storytelling**. There was an opportunity to attend a workshop to learn the chopstick dance and also to watch the amazing **Kung Fu Lion dance** performance outside Sir Duncan Rice Library.

We teamed up once again with **Aberdeen Féis** who offered a number of activities including **Gaelic songs**, games and fun craft sessions. The Féis events were for Gaelic and non-Gaelic speakers and were extremely popular with families and young children.

Thanks to the support of all our sponsors and supporters, especially **CNOONC International**, we were able to make all Children’s events **FREE** of charge allowing a great time for all the family.

“**Excellent, kids loved it and the teacher was brilliant.**”
Chinese Dance Workshop

“It was a very fun event, would love to see more in the future.”
Ah! The Element of Surprise

“**Excellent Fun – I loved the activities especially the snot making, circus skills and Chinese shuttlecocks. I even bought a plate spinning set.**”
Hall of Mayhem
May Fest ‘Open to All’ with the City and Community Programme

A brand-new exciting strand of programming supported by the University of Aberdeen and Aberdeen City Council took place during the 2019 festival across venues in the local community and city centre. In support of the 2019 festival theme ‘Open to All’ and in a drive to widen access to May Fest and the University, more than 30 events were programmed in the community venues Powis Community Centre and Tillydrone Church, as well as a full suite of events which took place in Aberdeen’s bustling city centre at venues such as Blue Lamp, Belmont Filmhouse and Waterstones.

Almost 200 people from the Powis and Tillydrone communities attended a series of free events that included children’s and adult authors, dance, music and science. Many young people were engaged in the communities of Powis and Tillydrone through a co-created programme which offered free children’s author events. These sessions saw published writers deliver talks and book signings in community venues. Young people were also provided with free books at these sessions and future events in these communities are planned to continue so that links can be strengthened throughout the year between local communities and the University.

More than 900 people attended events in Aberdeen’s City Centre which included music, dance, author readings and research-based discussions. May Fest City also delivered an exclusive masterclass with renowned director Jon S. Baird for young film and media students at the Belmont Filmhouse as well as multiple events at the famed Blue Lamp venue.
Support us!

“This is the most beautifully organised, varied, dynamic and friendly festival I have ever attended.”

The University of Aberdeen runs a wide-reaching programme of cultural and educational public events throughout the year, with something to suit all ages and interests.

We would be delighted to talk to you about opportunities to get involved and support our public engagement programme.

Festivals & Events Team
University of Aberdeen
King’s College
Regent Walk
Aberdeen
AB24 3FX

Email: festival@abdn.ac.uk
Telephone: 01224 273233